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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (02/19): "NEW ISRAELI OBSTACLES  
SHOULD NOT DELAY [INTERNAL UNITY] TALKS"

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Main Stories:

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Al Quds and Al Hayat Al Jadida lead with the Israeli cabinet  
decision to link the opening of Gaza crossings and any Gaza truce  
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agreement to the release of Israeli soldier Shalit. Palestinian  
Authority Presidency spokesman Abu Rudaynah responded that Israel  
should be held responsible for any deterioration in conditions in  
the Gaza Strip caused by the new policy, the papers report. Al  
Ayyam reports on the scolding of Israeli negotiator Amos Gilad by  
Israeli Premier Olmert, for publically calling the cabinet decision,  
"madness and an insult to Egypt." The paper adds that Gaza  
crossings will remain open for humanitarian assistance. A related  
DPA story on Al Ayyam's front page notes UN peace envoy Serry's  
warnings that any Gaza cease-fire that is not sustainable may lead  
to renewed war.

Al Ayyam leads with Egypt's decision to delay internal Palestinian  
talks that were scheduled for February 22 in Cairo. All front pages  
note that the delay is for at least two days with no new date  
specified. The papers quote an "Egyptian source" explaining that  
the delay would increase the chances of success in achieving  
reconciliation. The three papers quote Palestinian Authority (PA)  
Abbas stating on February 18 that PLO factions will go to Cairo,  
"with open minds and hearts" to form a Palestinian government that  
will not be the target of sanctions, will hold new elections and  
speed up Gaza reconstruction. The papers also noted that Abbas  
called on a halt to "hostile media campaigns" among factions and  
that he will begin a new international tour to raise funds for the  
PA.

The U.S. might accept a new Palestinian technocrat government that  
would not include any Fatah or Hamas members, according to a Reuters

report on Al Ayyam's and Al Hayat Al Jadida's front pages. The report cites an American official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, as its source. According to the official, such a government must accept the two-state solution. Should a new government include Hamas members, they would need to agree to the Middle East Quartet's three requirements, the report concludes. All the papers front page reports about Palestinian Authority (PA) Premier Fayyad signing an agreement with banks to deliver assistance directly to Gazans as part of a PA plan for Gaza reconstruction, that includes mechanisms to bypass Hamas. The papers remind readers that the plan will be presented at the March donors' conference in Cairo and that Fayyad has also called on donor countries to provide direct assistance that will bypass Hamas in Gaza.

Al Quds' front page runs a report on "Israel's unyielding position" to destroy East Jerusalem's Bustan neighborhood in Silwan in order to make a public park. The plan would destroy 100 houses, sheltering 1,500 Palestinians. The paper further adds that the Israeli municipality of Jerusalem rejected an alternate plan for urban development submitted by neighborhood residents in 2005. In other settlement news, Al Quds reports that a lower Israeli court will hearing the case of 29 Palestinian families who claim ownership of their homes in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, refuting ownership claims by an "Israeli settlement society." Meanwhile, Al Ayyam's front page reports that the PLO Executive Committee renewed calls for a halt to Israeli settlement activities on February 18.

The visit by Congressmen Baird and Ellison is the subject of inside reports in Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida. The papers report that PLO Chief Negotiator Saeb Erekat met on February 18 with U.S. Consul

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#### Main Stories:

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Al Quds and Al Hayat Al Jadida lead with the Israeli cabinet decision to link the opening of Gaza crossings and any Gaza truce agreement to the release of Israeli soldier Shalit. Palestinian Authority Presidency spokesman Abu Rudaynah responded that Israel should be held responsible for any deterioration in conditions in the Gaza Strip caused by the new policy, the papers report. Al Ayyam reports on the scolding of Israeli negotiator Amos Gilad by Israeli Premier Olmert, for publically calling the cabinet decision, "madness and an insult to Egypt." The paper adds that Gaza crossings will remain open for humanitarian assistance. A related DPA story on Al Ayyam's front page notes UN peace envoy Serry's warnings that any Gaza cease-fire that is not sustainable may lead to renewed war.

General Jake Waller and the Congressmen. The papers note that Erekat briefed the guests on the latest developments regarding Israeli settlement activities, checkpoints, "the siege" and closures. Erekat also called on the international community to reject any Israeli government that will not commit to the two-state solution and previous agreements. The three dailies also report that Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Al Malki met with the Congressmen and briefed them on "latest developments" and the urgent need for a peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict. In Israeli military operation news, Al Quds' and Al Ayyam's front pages report on two Israeli airstrikes on Gaza/Egypt border tunnels and a Hamas security compound in Gaza. The papers also report that Israel arrested 30 Palestinians in several West Bank towns on February 18.

Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page runs a Reuters story quoting the Executive Director of Boeing announcing that Israel has requested that Boeing provide Israel with a new "smart arms" system and that such a sale is being prepared.-----

#### BLOCK QUOTES:

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1) Al Quds' editorial is titled, "New Israeli obstacles shouldn't delay talks" (02/19): "[Israel] Hindering truce efforts means, in practical terms, that [Gaza] reconstruction will be delayed... however, the first consequence of the Israeli obstacle, is the announcement by Cairo to delay [internal Palestinian] talks scheduled for February 22... We believe that dialogue is a national top-priority, especially in light of the positive steps begun at

[recent]senior-level meetings between Fatah and Hamas in Cairo and Ramallah."

2) Talal Okal opines in Al Ayyam under the title, "Launching a preemptive [political] strike on Israel"(02/19): "Palestinians should mobilize their [resources by]... ending division so that Arabs and the international community must own their responsibility to confront the challenges that will visit evils on all Palestinians. Within the framework of declaring a political war, [we will] need to come up with a mechanism for filing a case against Israeli war criminals [for acts committed in the recent conflict in Gaza] before the international war crimes court."

WALLES